

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 32, 38-44 and 46 without prejudice.

Please amend claims 11, 12, 22, 23, 25, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 45, and 48 as follows:

11. (Amended) A folding knife, comprising:

a handle defining a blade cavity and a first end;

a blade having a first end and a second end opposite said first end; said first end of said blade having a blade pivot connected to said first end of said handle for pivotal movement of said blade about said blade pivot between an extended position wherein the blade is outside of said blade cavity and a retracted position wherein the blade is substantially within said blade cavity;

a longitudinally extending plunger carried in said blade cavity and having a first end and a second end wherein said second end is opposite said first end;

a pivoting sleeve provided in said handle, said sleeve receiving and longitudinally slidably carrying said first end of said plunger for longitudinal movement of said plunger relative to said sleeve as said blade moves between said retracted and extended positions; and

said second end of said plunger being pivotally connected to said first end of said blade for orbital movement about said blade pivot as said blade moves between said retracted and extended positions.

12. (Amended) A folding knife, comprising:

a handle defining a blade cavity and a first end;

a blade having a first end and a second end opposite said first end; said first end of said blade having a blade pivot connected to said first end of said handle for pivotal

movement of said blade about said blade pivot between an extended position wherein the blade is outside of said blade cavity and a retracted position wherein the blade is substantially within said blade cavity; and

a longitudinally extending compressible plunger adapted to assist with moving the blade between the retracted position and the extended position, or vice versa, the plunger having:

a first end slidably connected to said handle for longitudinal movement of said plunger relative to said handle as said blade moves between said retracted and extended positions; and

a second end opposite said first end, said second end of said plunger pivotally connected to said first end of said blade for orbital movement about said blade pivot as said blade moves between said retracted and extended positions.

22. (Amended) A knife as defined in claim 21, wherein the coil spring encircles said plunger.

23. (Amended) A folding knife, comprising:

a handle defining a blade cavity and a first end;

a blade having a first end and a second end opposite said first end; said first end of said blade having a blade pivot connected to said first end of said handle for pivotal movement of said blade about said blade pivot between an extended position wherein the blade is outside of said blade cavity and a retracted position wherein the blade is substantially within said blade cavity; and

a plunger including a spring, the plunger pivotally connected to the blade, the spring adapted to exert a pivoting force upon the blade in response to the spring being deformed, the spring being maximally deformed when the blade is pivoted to an intermediate point between the extended position and retracted position, thereby causing the spring to assist opening of the blade when the blade is pivoted from the retracted position toward the extended position beyond the intermediate point.

25. (Amended) A knife as defined in claim 23, further comprising a safety member connected to said handle for movement between a locking position and an unlocking position; said safety member defining an engagement portion projecting into a path of movement of said plunger when said safety member is in said locking position for contacting and restraining movement of said plunger when said blade is in said extended position, to thereby lock said blade in said extended position.

28. (Amended) A knife as defined in claim 23, wherein an end of said plunger includes a clevis having a pin pivotally connected to said first end of said blade.

30. (Amended) A folding knife comprising:

a handle;

a blade pivoted on said handle for movement between stowed and deployed conditions relative to the handle; and

a plunger including an elongate, force-transmitting biasing spring, where the plunger is operatively coupled with the blade for orbital movement of a portion of the plunger about the blade and the spring is operatively interposed said handle and said blade, where said spring exhibits both a rise and a fall in the biasing force carried through the spring when the

blade is moved from one of the stowed condition and the deployed condition to the other of the stowed condition and the deployed condition.

31. (Amended) The knife of claim 30, wherein the mentioned rise and fall in biasing force occur such that the rise in the biasing force occurs before the fall in the biasing force.

34. (Amended) A folding knife comprising:

a handle;

a blade pivoted on said handle for movement between stowed and deployed conditions relative to the handle; and

an elongate, force-transmitting biasing spring having an effective length, the spring operatively attached to said blade, where said spring is adapted to exhibit both an increase and a decrease in the effective length of the spring, with movement of said blade generally from one of the stowed condition and the deployed condition toward the other condition.

35. (Amended) The knife of claim 34, wherein the increase in the effective length occurs before the decrease in effective length.

45. (Amended) A knife comprising:

a handle;

a blade pivotally held in the handle to move about a blade pivot point, such that the blade moves between a stowed position and a deployed position; and

a plunger including a spring, where the plunger is coupled to the blade such that a portion of the plunger remains a fixed distance from the blade pivot point, and where the spring operates on the blade to maintain the blade in the stowed position when the blade is moved to the stowed position, and operates on the blade to urge the blade toward the